

IRISH COMMUNIONS IN THE OLDEN TIMES.

By David McMeekin.

There are still a few congregations in Ireland connected with what is known as the Reformed Presbyterian Synod—the old Covenanting church of Scotland. Their membership is neither numerous nor influential in the present day. One of their regnant principles is that their members should take no part in the election of members of parliament. They would also preach in the pulpits of the Irish General Assembly, but on no account would they return the compliment and ask ministers of the General Assembly to preach in their pulpits. They are narrow beyond description, but yet a trustworthy, reliable people, who read their Bibles, attend their churches and sanctify the Sabbath day. In conversation with an aged member of this communion lately his description of a communion service in the olden times will bear repetition.

The services on a communion Sabbath he said commenced at 11 o'clock in the morning and continued up till 8 o'clock in the evening. There were several ministers present to assist the local pastor. The action sermon was preached by the minister of the congregation, when Psalms would be explained, chapters expounded and a sermon preached, the entire service extending over a period of three hours. After this one of the ministers present would fence the table, as it was called—that is he would erect a fence around the communion for its protection—showing who should and who should not enter within the sacred enclosure. The ministers in the Highlands of Scotland were and still are specialists in fencing the table. I heard of one of them who on one occasion debarred his hearers so vehemently that only three individuals communicated.

In the days of which we speak the people did not as they do now communicate in the pews—tables at this time were erected in the aisles of the church, covered over with linen cloth, to which the officiating minister invited intending communicants. For a time a solemn silence prevailed, after which a move would be made in one of the pews by the rising of an individual—then another would rise, then another, until a sufficient number had taken their places at the table. During their progress to the table they were all in the most reverent manner, singing portions of Psalm 103.

The tables at which the several communicants were to be present were numbered on the tokens, little square pieces of pewter having the name of the church on one side and the number of the table on the other. When all were seated the presiding minister would commence the solemn service by an address, after which he would consecrate the elements. This being done the tokens would be collected, after which the elements would be distributed. When all had partaken the minister would close this part of the service with an address, at the conclusion of which the communicants would leave the table as they came to it—singing. Afterwards the second table would assemble and be similarly addressed and so on in succession until all had partaken. It was not an unusual thing to have eight or ten tables. Communion was observed only twice in the year and so

some of those communicating came from great distances. The closing exercises of the day were usually taken by the minister of the place, the only light they had being that supplied by wax candles and the moon. There were other services besides the Sabbath ones that those coming to communion were expected to attend. There was the Thursday Fast Day service. Then there was a service on Saturday, while Monday was spent in the church as a day of thanksgiving. A practice that prevailed also at communion was for the officiating ministers during the week succeeding communion to visit the members of the congregation and make the following inquiries; 1. Were you present at communion and if not why? 2. If at communion how did you enjoy the service? My old Covenanting friend told me that these prolonged communion services were concluded usually with an address from 2Cor. 13:11, when the people would be visibly affected. The communions here now are not so prolonged.

Ireland.

A FRESH START TOWARD CHRIST.

By Rev. Theodore L. Cuyler, D. D.

A man has just gone out of my room who said to me: "I am going to begin the new year with a **fresh start**." All his life he had been drifting farther and farther off from where his conscience told him that he ought to be. His "fresh start" was toward Jesus Christ. And every unconverted person who reads these lines ought to take the same step; you expect to do it at **some** time before you die; do it now. Jesus Christ waited for you all last year, and many years before it; hasten to him at once.

Do not wait for any keener sense of guilt; people often discover more of their own weakness and wickedness after they have come to Jesus than they ever dreamed of before. Do not wait for more feeling. If you had fallen from a ferryboat into the North river, filled with floating ice, would you wait to feel colder before you grasped the rope flung out to you? When Jesus told the blind beggar to come to him, he cast off his garment and came straightway. When the leper besought Christ to heal him, the Master bade him "go show himself to the priest." The suffering wretch did not stop to count his scabs or scales, nor inquire, "What good will it do me to go?" He asked no questions, but started, and "**as he went** he was healed." The path of obedience was the path of salvation; it will be just so with you.

When Jesus encountered James and John on the lake shore of Gennesaret, he simply said to them, "Follow me." He did **not** come twice after them, nor did he need to speak twice to them. Their destiny hung upon ten minutes; so may yours. Suppose that these two fishermen had treated the Savior as you have always treated him, where were their wonderful history, their priceless service, and their crown of glory? Their destiny turned on a "Yes" or a "No." They did not stop to cry over their sins, or to bargain with their new Mas-